

Lake Clark

Lake Clark National Park
Lake Clark National Preserve
Alaska

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Set between the Aleutian and Alaska ranges, the Chigmit Mountains divide the park interior from Cook Inlet. Highest of Chigmits peaks is 10,197-foot Redoubt Volcano. The park offers exceptional opportunities to experience the remoteness of wild Alaska. Hikers and backpackers must be well-equipped and self-sufficient for safe backcountry travel. Dall sheep haunt alpine ridges and meadows and steep, rocky slopes in the park. It takes about eight years for a ram to grow its circular horns, characteristic of its species. The outlet of Lower Twin Lake flows into the Chilikadrotna River, one of the three national wild rivers in the national park and preserve. The Dena'ina people have lived around Lake Clark for at least 900 years. Many residents of the region descend from Dena'ina people who settled and lived in the Kijik area. The Lake Clark watershed is critical spawning and rearing habitat for sockeye salmon. Sockeye spawn in summer and fall in rivers, streams and upwelling areas on the lakeshore.

Wild, Spectacular Scenic Diversity

Top photo: Fishing on Lake Clark ©GEORGE WUERTHNER
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Dynamic forces of fire and ice have shaped Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Over many millennia glaciers gouged and shaped new landforms created by volcanic eruptions and uplifts of Earth's crust. These contrasting forces are still active today—as glaciers shroud the shoulders of the park's imposing and potentially active volcanoes, Redoubt (10,197 ft) and Iliamna (10,016 ft), on the Cook Inlet coast.

Lake Clark National Park's nearly 2.6 million acres include the rugged Chigmit Mountains bounded by the Aleutian Range to the south and the Alaska Range to the north. Relentless grinding of tectonic plates, uplift, earthquakes, and glacial scraping, scouring, and mounding created the Chigmits' awesome, jagged array of peaks. The national preserve encompasses more than 1.4 million acres and adjoins the park to the south and west, with rolling foothills, boreal forests, alpine lakes, wild rivers, and sweeping expanses of tundra. The varied topography of the park and preserve creates habitats for a diverse mix of plants and animals.

On their west side the Chigmits descend via tundra-covered foothills to boreal forest and include spectacular wilderness with lakes and wild rivers

flowing southwest toward Bristol Bay. The area supports a variety of large land mammals including Dall sheep, caribou, moose, wolves, and black and brown bears. Lake Clark stretches 40 miles, and its watershed provides critical spawning and rearing habitats for sockeye salmon and sustains the Bristol Bay salmon fishery, one of the world's largest sockeye salmon fisheries.

The park and preserve beckon anglers, wildlife viewers, river runners, campers, backpackers, and mountaineers. Anglers find world-class fishing for rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, lake trout, northern pike, and arctic grayling. River runners raft or kayak the Tlikakila, Mulchatna, or Chilikadrotna national wild rivers. Campers and backpackers explore high tundra valleys, foothills, and secluded lakeshores in the park's wilderness areas, and some of America's most remote, rugged peaks challenge mountaineers.

East of the Chigmits, Cook Inlet features shallow bays, rocky headlands, and many offshore reefs populated by marine mammals—harbor seals, Steller sea lions, sea otters, harbor porpoises, and beluga whales. From the Chigmits' eastern flank, rivers rush to tidewater through coastal

rainforests of Sitka and white spruce. En route these rivers create marshes and outwash plains—prime habitat for bald eagles, diverse migratory birds, and resident waterfowl. In spring, brown bears feed in sedge meadows of estuaries, where salt and fresh waters mix, and in summer catch salmon in streams and rivers flowing into Cook Inlet. Coastal cliffs hold not only fossil remnants of 150 million years of sea life but provide habitat for peregrine falcons and rookeries for puffins, cormorants, kittiwakes, and other seabirds.

This richly diverse region has been a homeland for Native Alaskan peoples for centuries, with Dena'ina Athabaskan sites throughout today's park and preserve, and areas of Yup'ik occupation along the southern part of Iliamna Lake. Many Dena'ina people living near Lake Clark today have roots at Kijik, a national historic landmark and archeological district. It once supported a large, multi-village community. Kijik, from the Dena'ina, *Qizh'jeh*, means "a place where people gathered."

The 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) created 10 new National Park System areas, including Lake Clark National

Park and Preserve. ANILCA gives rural Alaska residents priority for subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on federal public lands. Residents of Nondalton, Iliamna, Lime Village, Newhalen, Pedro Bay, and Port Alsworth, and people living in the park, continue to engage in subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering activities inside the park and preserve under state and federal regulations. These communities and the area inside the park are designated resident zone communities because their residents have a long history of using resources in the park for their sustenance and livelihood.

In ANILCA, Congress also designated more than 2.4 million acres of the park as wilderness to preserve the area's natural conditions and wilderness character in perpetuity as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Access and Information

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve is not on the road system. Access is primarily by small aircraft. Scheduled commercial flights between Anchorage and Port Alsworth provide direct access, and flights from Anchorage to Nondalton and Iliamna put you near the park. Air charter services in Anchorage, Port Alsworth, Kenai, and Homer provide access to remote areas of the park.

The field headquarters and visitor center in Port Alsworth provide visitor information and basic emergency serv-



ices. Several remote cabins throughout the park are staffed in summer to help backcountry travelers. The field headquarters also offers detailed area information, topographic maps, park guides, and lists of accommodations and local services.

The administrative office is at 240 West Fifth Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501; 907-644-3626. There is also a field office at 2181 Kachemak Dr., Homer, AK 99603.

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve General Delivery Port Alsworth, AK 99653 907-781-2218 www.nps.gov/laci

There are more than 380 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, please visit www.nps.gov.

What to See and Do

The park's undeveloped areas of the park (2.6 million acres) and preserve (1.4 million acres) include rugged mountains, active volcanoes, dramatic glaciers, wild rivers and scenic lakes, boreal forests, open expanses of tundra, and jagged coastlines.

For most activities you must either be well equipped and self-sufficient when you arrive or make advance arrangements with a guide, outfitter, or lodge operator. Air services based in Port Alsworth, Anchorage, Kenai, and Homer offer drop-off services, flight-

seeing, and day trips for fly-in fishing and viewing bears and other wildlife.

A system of hiking trails begins in Port Alsworth and provides access to Tanalian Mountain, Tanalian Falls, and Kontrashibuna Lake for day hikes and short backpacking trips. There are no other developed trails. Mountainous areas are steep, rugged, and subject to inclement weather all year. Lowlands can be boggy, wet, and dotted with dense thickets of alder and willow scrub. To explore backcountry, consider backpacking in

the western foothills, for travel on open and relatively dry tundra.

Three national wild rivers—Tlikakila, Chilikadrotna and Mulchatna—provide opportunities for float trips and sport fishing. Sport fishing is allowed in both the park and preserve. The preserve is open to sport hunting under State of Alaska regulations. The park is closed to sport hunting.

Note: Winter travel is recommended only for people experienced with cold-weather camping and survival techniques.

Weather, Precautions, and Safety

Temperatures on the park's east side near Cook Inlet average between 50° and 65°F from June through August with heavy precipitation. The park's interior—west of the Chigmit Mountains—is warmer and drier in summer with temperatures reaching 80°F.

Frost and snow can occur in September and October—anticipate frost even in mid-summer. March and early April are best for cross-country skiing, snow permitting. From mid-April to late May thawing streams and lakes make all travel difficult

and dangerous. Strong winds can occur at any time and may be severe in and near mountain passes. Winter temperatures in the interior can fall to -40°F or lower.

You should know and test your gear before you arrive and possess backcountry skills for wilderness survival. Filter, chemically treat, or boil all drinking water. Leave an itinerary with someone before you head out and notify them when you complete your trip.

Brown and black bears, moose, caribou, wolves, and other animals are

wild and not used to humans. Stay at a safe distance and do not approach closely. Get information on wildlife encounters at the visitor center in Port Alsworth and be familiar with it before starting your trip.

Note: Many local residents live a subsistence way of life and many tracts of private land are in the park and preserve. These parcels are not open to public use without land owner permission. Please be courteous and respect private property.

Guides, Outfitting, and Supplies

Few places sell equipment and supplies in the park. Stores in Nondalton and Iliamna—air access only—sell limited foodstuffs and gear. Plan to outfit in Kenai, Homer, or Anchorage and bring adequate food and gear so you are self-sufficient and prepared for changing weather and potential emergencies.

Merchants in Nondalton, Iliamna, and Port Alsworth and lodges on Lake Clark and the Cook Inlet coast offer rooms, cabins, meals, and guide and outfitter services. These services are limited, so make

your arrangements well in advance. Some air and boat charter operators also provide guides and rental equipment—contact 907-781-2218 or nps.gov/akso/concessions for a list of licensed operators.

You are generally on your own and dependent on your own resources here. Bring high-quality clothing and gear: synthetic pile and wind-proof outerwear, thermal underwear, rain gear, and tents able to withstand strong winds with rain flies and mosquito netting. Insect repellent and sunscreen are high-

ly recommended. All food, toiletries, and garbage should be carried and stored in bear resistant containers. These may be checked out at the visitor center in Port Alsworth. *Carry emergency food rations because bad weather can delay your scheduled pick-up.*

Do not use the map in this brochure for backpacking or navigation. U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps that cover the park and preserve are: Lime Hills, Lake Clark, Iliamna, Kenai, Seldovia, and Tyonek.